MOVIE PICTORIAL

LOIS WEBER and PHILLIPS SMALLEY

A Practical and Gifted Pair With High Ideals

By RICHARD WILLIS

The artistic altruist is so really rare that a combination of such personalities makes it peculiarly impressive and interesting. The double dispensation of the genius to create character, and the gift to enact them is the unusual equipment of the Smalleys.

The deeper truths of their lives' cycle, form basic motives that animate their picturesque portrayals in unending reelings of the new realistic art preservatives

AS THIS is being written, the five-reel photoplay "Hypocrites" is being presented at the Long Acre Theater in New York City and the Gotham critics are unanimous in writing it up as one of the most profound and brilliant of motion picture psychological dramas.

The author and producer of "Hypocrites" and numerous other photoplays which are far above the average, is one of the most charming women I have ever met. I have known her for some time and have always found her the same, and feeling sure of a welcome from Lois Weber and her fine looking actor husband, Phillips Smalley, I duly pressed the little button by the door of their bungalow and was accorded the welcome.

It is a charming home, one that the lady designed and furnished. "She did it all herself," Phillips Smalley said. "I just paid my little fifty per cent and she did the rest." The furnishings and the color scheme are in subdued tints and the delightful rooms furnish an excellent index to her character. There is no jarring note, for comfort fits in with delicacy so that even the flowers blend with the general atmosphere.

Lois Weber, graceful and gracious with a wealth of dark hair, her long lashes giving her eyes a somewhat dreamy look, a lady whose carriage makes her almost stately, was just a living part of the general soothing effect, and her vivacious, youthful sister (an adoring young person) who sat at Miss Weber's feet, proved an excellent foil with her brighter coloring.

Just as Lois Weber's domicile reflects her, so does the study of Phillips Smalley indicate his vigorous personality. The walls of his room are covered with pictures of his friends, professional photographs signed with some inscription. Smalley is a well set-up man, with an actor's face, strong and ruddy tinted. His eyes sparkle with wit and good humor and he forms a sharp contrast to his wife.

During the evening I discovered that Lois Weber is an accomplished musician, and she admitted a penchant for the music of "Madame Butterfly," which she interprets delightfully.

"I used to play a great deal," said she, "especially when I was interested in mission work which occupied much of my time, but, I am out of practice now although I play a little every evening for relaxation."

"I know that you are honestly interested in the uplift of the motion picture industry," I said. "I want to get your views on any phase of it that you choose to discuss."

"Yes, we are both very sincerely interested," answered Miss Weber, "and we believe that the future is very bright. There is much yet to be done though. In the first place, I really believe that the day of the serial play is nearly over and I am glad of it. The public will always want melodrama, and good melodrama is wholesome as long as it is decently presented, but the serial photoplays of today are for the most part merely a mixture of sensational and entirely ridiculous or impossible incidents and are not by any means an index of truth or possibility. I am often twitted with trying to produce and write plays which are above the heads of the public, but I resent this as an insult to the general public, who, I believe, are as well able to interpret beautiful thoughts and to fully understand photoplays, which lead one's desires for better things."

"We have a motto if you would call it that," interrupted Phillips Smalley. "'Nothing is over the heads of the general public,' and I think it is a true one too. Besides both my wife and myself have produced a large number of what are termed 'uplift' photoplays and the box office receipts have disproven the fact that they puzzle audiences. Do you think that a commercial management would put up with motion pictures which did not appeal to the public? Not a bit of it."

Mrs. Smalley smiled and nodded her approval and continued. "I am very glad that established actors and actresses from the legitimate stage were called in by some of the leading manufacturers for the reason that they attracted a class

In their workaday surroundings, acting under the open sky or by the flaming arcs of the studio, or amid the restful environment of the study at home, they visualize impressions or record them for others, so that their duality of gifts and graces find charming and sympathetic expression.

of people to the motion picture theaters who never thought of attending before. At the same time I do not believe that the fad will last long; indeed, the time is close at hand when the public will still call for the adaptation of well known plays and novels, but will want them interpreted by well known and accomplished photoplay artists who are better fitted in every way to successfully portray the parts they are given, than the stars from the legitimate stage. There are a few of the stage stars who are fitted for this work, and I include Elsie Janis and the Farnums, but, as a general rule the artists are either too old to defy the cruel camera or else they do not understand the newer art, and the result is that they are jerky and unnatural in their actions and cannot shake off their stage mannerisms."

"Photoplay acting requires considerable experience," said Mr Smalley; "it takes time and hard work to get used to screen work. We have both had considerable stage experience and know what we are talking about. I shudder even now when I think of our first pictures. There is another thing, a man may be a good actor on the legitimate stage and yet not have what is termed a good screen appearance and many a good actor shows up badly when photographed. One can never truly ascertain until he has seen himself on the screen and that is why many a reasonably good actor or actress has been a failure at this particular profession."

In answer to my query as to what length a photoplay should go, Miss Weber said "I think that four or five reels are enough. The brain will not permit of viewing more than this number of reels, for I really believe the watching of the film has an hypnotic effect. Really, I do not think that any stated length should be given for a particular subject. It should go just the length that the subject requires and I think that this improvement is coming, too."

They are not pedantic, this gifted pair, and there is never a doubt that they are intensely in earnest and intend to carry out their ideas and ideals. They are entitled to express their opinions too, and these opinions are worth due reflection, for they have arrived at conclusions after much study and much work and varied experience. Miss Weber was well known on the boards and on the concert platform Mr. Smalley is a graduate of Oxford University and was both an actor and manager and it was while he was managing the "Why Girls Leave Home" company in which Miss Weber was playing, that they decided their common interests would be materially cemented by matrimony. They have been sympathetic co-workers and during the time they have been acting in and making pictures, they have done much to help improve the art, and have ever striven to give the public worthy photoplays with an uplift.

This talented couple have acted together in pictures ever since they decided to "try out" the then new "fad." They first acted and directed with the Gaumont company for two years and were with the Universal for many months (to which company they have just returned) before joining the Bosworth Incorporated company, and at both of the last concerns they have made and acted in some very notable productions, most of which have been written by Lois Weber.

As I left, Phillips Smalley called out after me: "You need not say I am the handsomest actor in the world, and for goodness sake don't call Miss Weber a striking brunette. Beyond that, do your worst and call again some time."

As they stood in the doorway of their cheery home with the subdued lights behind them, I could not but admire the handsome couple, they are such mighty good pals and there are none too many such.